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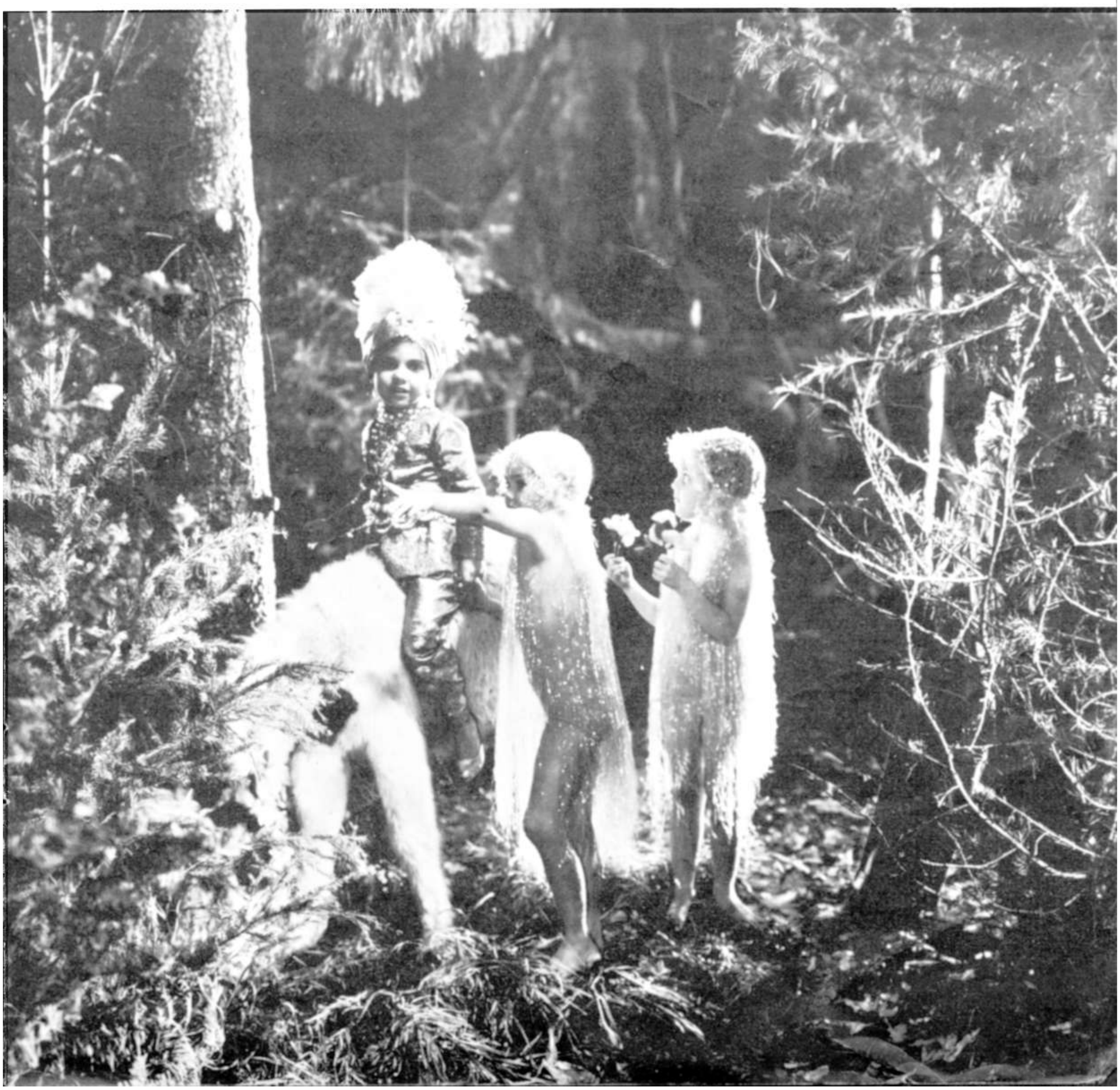
LUCIFER

A KENNETH ANGER KOMPENDIUM Tony Rayns

"This rite of passage scampering in spangles and plumes through Reinhardt's enchanted wood remains the shining moment of my childhood." Kenneth Anger, aged three, in Max Reinhardt's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.



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1 STATEMENTS

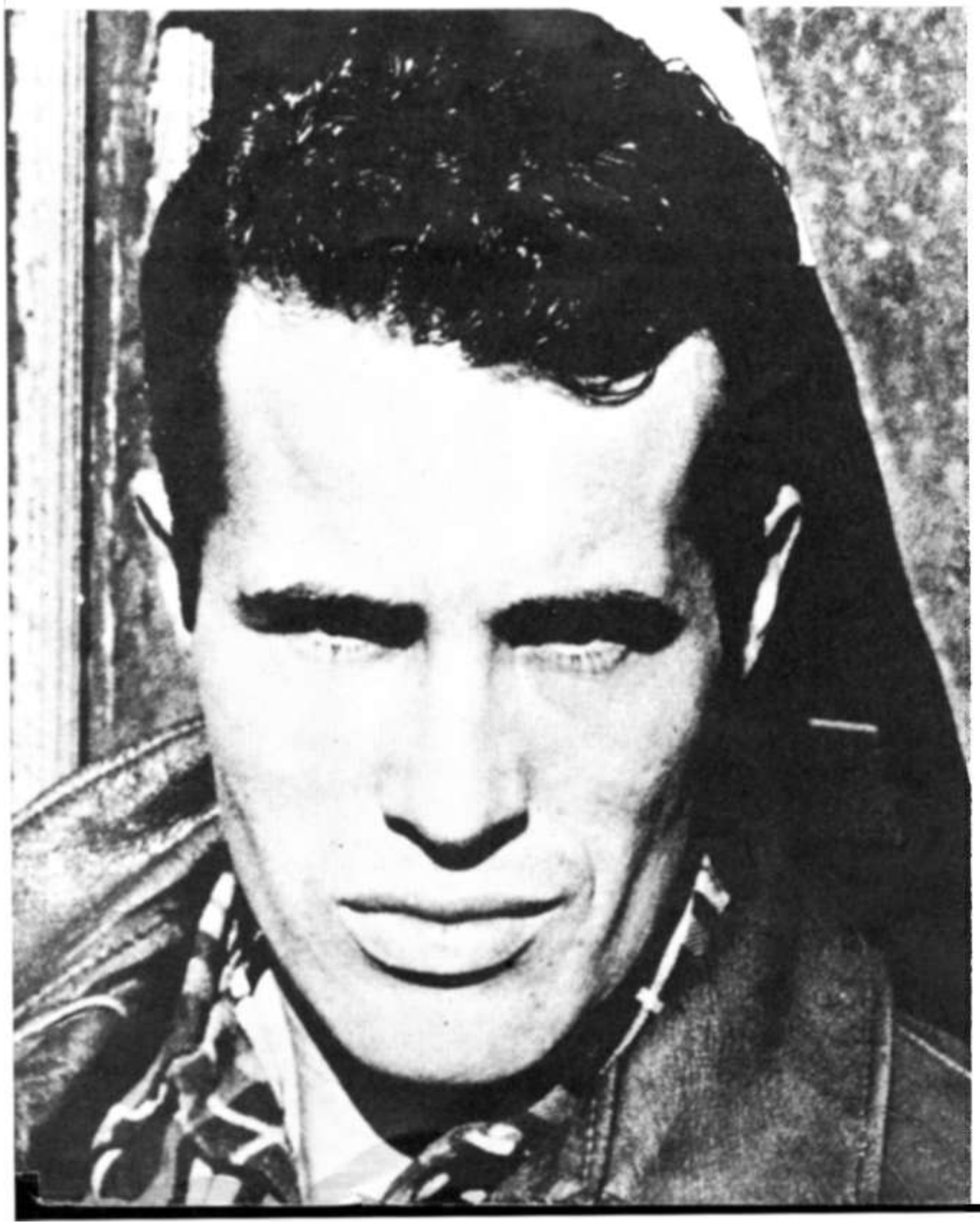
'I have always considered movies evil; the day that cinema was invented was a black day for mankind. Centuries before photography there were talismans, which actually anticipated photographs, since the dyes they used on the cheap vellum produced patterns when they faded in light. A talisman was a sticky fly-paper trying to trap a spirit — cunningly you printed on it a 'photograph' of the demon you wanted to capture in it. Photography is a blatant attempt to steal the soul. The astral body is always just latent in a person, and certain cunning and gifted photographers can take an *image* of the astral body. The whole thing is having an image of someone to *control* them. If you're out of your mind with love, it becomes understandable. *Any* crime is justifiable in the name of Love. In fact, it shouldn't have to be a 'crime': *Anything* is justifiable in the name of Love.

My films are primarily concerned with sexuality in people. My reason for filming has nothing to do with 'cinema' at all; it's a transparent excuse for capturing people, the equivalent of saying 'Come up & see my etchings' . . . it's wearing a little thin now . . . So I consider myself as working Evil in an evil medium.'

2 LORE

'I am a non-prolific film-maker — the opposite of, say, Andy Warhol. I show very few of the films I have made . . .' Kenneth Anger has six films in distribution, representing some 22 years' filming: FIREWORKS (1947), EAUX D'ARTIFICE (1953), INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME (1954-66), SCORPIO RISING (1964), KUSTOM KAR KOMMANDOS (1965) and INVOCATION OF MY DEMON BROTHER (also known as ZAP, 1969).

Kenneth Anger in 1957, photographed by Chester Kessler



His earliest exhibited film was made at the age of 7, with the Boy Scouts — *Ferdinand the Bull,* later done as a cartoon by Disney. 'I'd been in the Reinhardt *Midsummer Night's Dream,* mixing with Hollywood people, and so I knew what effeminate people were. In *Ferdinand* I had the bull (two boys under a skin) played effeminate . . .' His family owned a 16mm Kodak movie camera with a 100-foot load, used to film outings, and Anger would take end-scraps from those reels for films of his own. *Fireworks,* made at the age of 17, was shot in his Hollywood home on three nights when his parents were away on film stock stolen from the U.S. Navy (obviously, Anger doesn't regret this theft in the least, but he has since been punished grossly disproportionately by thefts of his equipment and other property — in the case of the original 1966 *Lucifer Rising,* the film itself). Typically, Anger then began a massively over-ambitious project for a feature in colour called *Puce Women,* and completed only one sequence (*Puce Moment*) which he no longer distributes, but occasionally shows. Then Kodak labs confiscated the footage for a ritual film in colour called *The Love that Whirls,* because of nudity; and two subsequent projects that Anger began in France (with some assistance from Cocteau) failed for lack of means. A version of Cocteau's ballet LE JEUNE HOMME ET LA MORT which Anger filmed (with Roland Petit choreography) in a wintery garden in the absence of a set survives only in a b & w version, which cannot be shown for copyright reasons. In 1953 he brought off his first completed film for 6 years, *Eaux d'Artifice,* shot in the gardens of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli. In America in 1954 he shot the material for *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome,* and prepared the original single-screen version, with its emphatically cyclic structure, using for soundtrack music by Harry Partch (to a 43-tone scale, played on instruments of his own invention: the cloud chamber, diamond marimba, chromelodeon and others). In 1955 he shot the short documentary account of Aleister Crowley's retreat in Cefalu, *Thelema Abbey.* He prepared the triple-screen version of *Pleasure Dome* (in which the main screen grew 'wings' at the movie's climax) for the 1958 Brussels EXPRML Festival, where it was run along with *Eaux d'Artifice; Pleasure Dome* in fact began a session that climaxed with Richard Williams' *The Little Island,* but despite this won the *L'Age d'Or* award. In Europe, Stan Brakhage filmed Anger as the only living person in his lament *The Dead,* feeling that the man's depressed frustration related to the moods he was creating in filming tombs. 59 to 61 Anger filmed the material for a version of the Olympia Press novel *L'Histoire d'O,* but never completed the movie because of both a characteristic over-ambitiousness and, apparently, harrassment from the authorities. He returned to America (where Marie Menken shot her *Arabesque for Kenneth Anger*), and made *Scorpio Rising,* on the strength of which he was given a Ford Foundation grant. 'I was completely breadless, and I conscientiously paid off Lab bills . . . by the time I'd taken care of my debts, there was a piece missing of the $10,000 . . .'* He began *Kustom Kar Kommandos*, but completed only one sequence (now distributed as an excerpt from a work no longer in progress) before the money ran out. 66 he began the 'Love Vision' LUCIFER RISING, abandoned when the footage was stolen after a benefit screening of a rough-cut. Anger publicly renounced film-making with a full-page *In Memoriam* in *The Village Voice,* and came to Britain to

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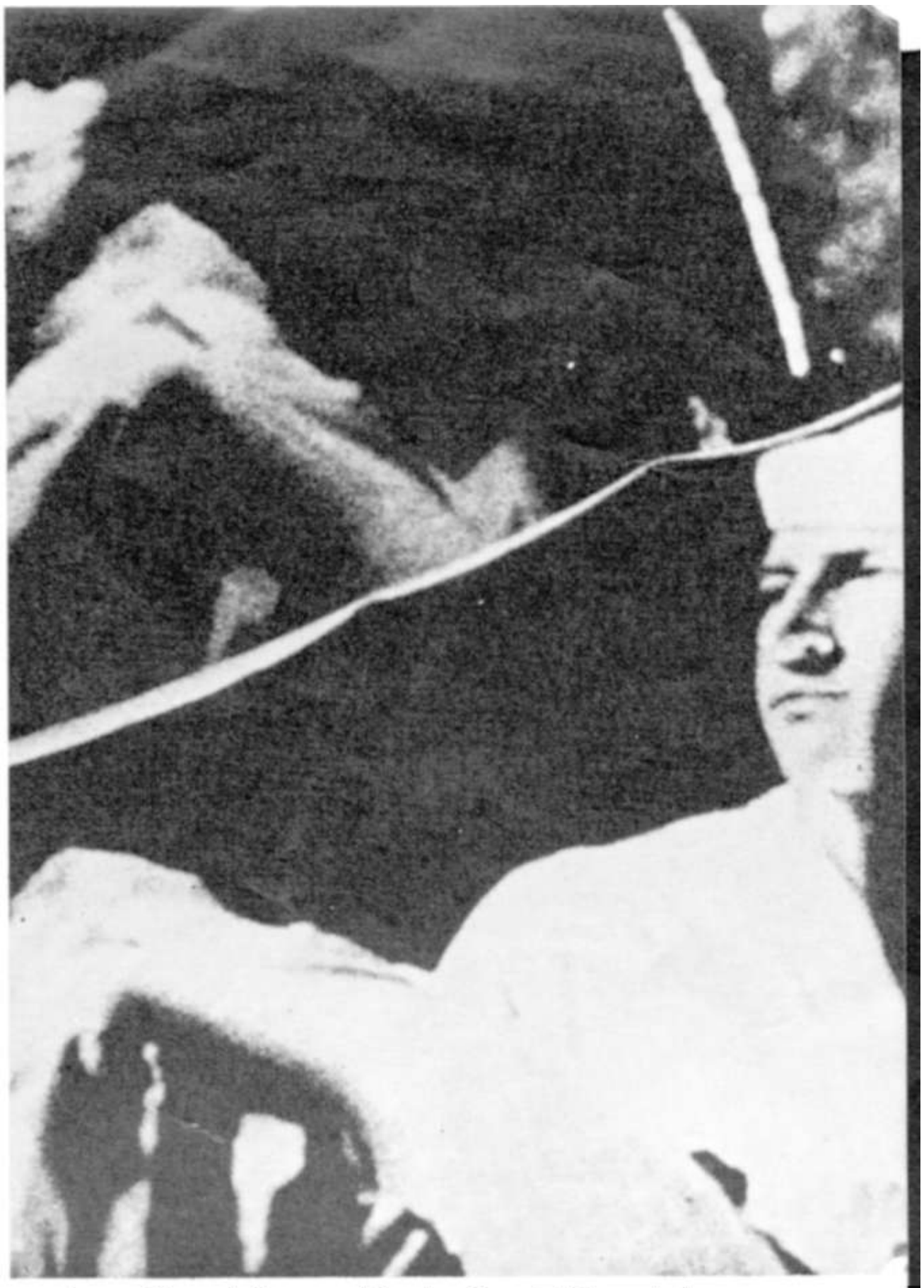
The dream . . . .



. . . . burns. Kenneth Anger and Gordon Gray in 'Fireworks'.

prepare the Sacred Mushroom Edition of *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome.* He made the ANGER AQUARIAN ARCANUM, a series of Magick symbols and Crowley paintings accompanied by *Kubla Khan,* as a prologue for this, but has since dropped it. In July of this year he completed a third editing of footage shot in San Francisco, and originally intended as Part One of *Lucifer Rising,* now shown as an 11-minute film *Invocation of my Demon Brother.* He is now planning a new *Lucifer Rising* as a full-length feature in colour, and a short Magick film on the Goddess Kali, using footage shot with friends on a recent trip to India, and additional footage to be shot in this country.

Anger's films, always rigorous, have become increasingly so as he has become more self-demanding. Everything in *Fireworks* was achieved in one take, that being the only film for which Anger has ever had a script. The editing ratio for *Scorpio* was around 5:1; that for *Invocation* was nearer 20:1 — the film having been through two (unshown) versions, and months of careful refinement.

3 IMAGE

The only film-makers Anger passionately admires are Sergei Eisenstein and D. W. Griffith; Griffith as the creator of mythic Hollywood, and builder of Babylon in Hollywood, and the man who developed and refined his films with each successive print. (Anger's book *Hollywood Babylon* concerns the cataclysmic decline of Hollywood from Griffith's splendour to today's effective write-off, pointing out the Star as the agent of the decline: 'There was Venus and Adonis only called Clara and Rudy; there was Pan called Charlie; there was even old Bacchus named Fatty and maimed Vulcan named Lon. It was an illusion, a tease, a fraud; it was almost as much fun as the 'old-time religion' — without blood on the altars. But the blood would come . . .'). Eisenstein as the cinema's foremost Maker; René Micha, writing about *Scorpio* in *Les Temps Modernes,* pointed out the relationship: 'The montage is conceived in the complex sense desired by Eisenstein — physiological, emotional, intellectual; to which is added (precisely as in *Ivan the Terrible*) a formidable surrealism.' Anger is now unquestionably the world's foremost exponent of the 'montage of attractions'. Co-incidentally, Eisenstein's film-making career was as littered with broken projects as Anger's has been.

The other Maker to have significantly affected Anger was, of course, Jean Cocteau. Cocteau's famous championship ship of *Fireworks* (' . . .comes from that beautiful night from which emerge all the true works. It touches the quick of the soul, and this is very rare.') complements the fact that Anger's film has close affinities with *Le Sang d'un Poète* — little direct borrowing (perhaps the white hand, and the journey beyond the door) but it's difficult to suggest two films with greater *textural* unity, notably in their respective openings — close-ups of the protagonist ill at ease in his environment, and in front of his own reflection. *Orphée's* tangle of life, love and death, and its motor-cyclist iconography obviously lead towards *Scorpio Rising.* Curiously, and probably co-incidentally, some of Cocteau's characters in *Sang d'un Poète* look quite strikingly like

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Shiva and Kali in *Pleasure Dome.* And *Lucifer Rising,* if Anger can finally release it, will be his *Testament d'Orphée.*

Aside from these, Anger's stated preference is for horror and fantasy cinema: 'I have my favorite serials which I've seen over and over: *Flash Gordon, Daredevils of the Red Circle, Chandu.* That, and the kind of little B film they used to make at Warner's and Columbia . . . The horror film is a great form; it's a kind of nightmare wonderland . . .'* In conversation, Anger will frequently refer to a Thirties Hollywood fantasy for a point of reference. It is notable that such a film as Victor Halperin's *White Zombie* touches thematically on many of Anger's preoccupations.

4 FILM FORM

'I like the idea that an experience can be put in a can and somebody can recreate it. But when I work on a film I don't think I could ever worry about whether people will like or understand it. When I really get into that creative thing of making a movie, it's just me, and the camera, and whatever else happens to be there.'*

Anger has an amazing instinctive grasp of all the elements of film-making; his films actively work out much of Eisenstein's theoretical writing about the cinema. For instance, Eisenstein's ideal of *chromophonic* (colour/sound) montage, described in *The Film Sense,* is startlingly achieved in the 'party lights' sequence in *Scorpio Rising,* where the Randells' hard, dense arrangement of the song —for the first time in the movie, cutting in before the end of the preceding song — is matched by a thickening in the terms of reference in the montage, while at the same time the lyrics relate explicitly to the film's development of its colour scale. Equally, the tightly controlled pastel colours of *Kustom Kar Kommandos* perfectly match the 'pastel' arrangement of *Dream Lover* for the Parris Sisters. Self-evidently, this is not chromophonic montage in Eisenstein's lofty sense, but it comes nearer than anything in commercial cinema, and produces film-making as rich in resonance as anything of Eisenstein's own.

Fascinatingly, Anger plans to use another of Eisenstein's theories in making *Lucifer Rising*: he wants to explore the possibilities of *vertical* composition. In his crucial essay *The Dynamic Square* Eisenstein complains that the advent of cinemascope cripples yet further the adventurous film-maker's chances of breaking away from the limitations of passive horizontal composition: 'It is my purpose to defend the cause of the 50% of compositional possibilities which have been banished from the light of the screen. It is my desire to chant the hymn of the male, the strong, the virile, active, *vertical* composition! I am not anxious to enter into the dark phallic and sexual ancestry of the vertical shape as a symbol of growth, strength or power . . .' Naturally enough, this precisely *is* Anger's desire: 'I guess my whole trip is phallic worship . . .'

5 ALLEGORY OF LUCIFER

As far back as Kenneth Anger remembers, he's been 'on a fire/light trip'. He recalls being a minor childhood arsonist ('Nothing big — a few fields . . . and a church'), and he once built a miniature volcano in the family backyard for a science-fiction puppet film called *Prisoner of Mars.* Light

Shiva venoms Pan's drink; the turning point in 'Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome'. Paul Mathison and Samson de Brier

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is central to his films. The opening narration of *Fireworks* states the thesis: 'Inflammable desires dampened by day under the cold water of consciousness are ignited at night by the libertarian matches of sleep and burst forth in showers of shimmering incandescence . . .', illustrated in the the opening shot of the film, a flash-frame of a phallic fire-brand thrust into turbulent water, which is repeated directly after the famous climax with a phallic Roman Candle in orgasm. The Dreamer (Anger himself) goes 'out in the night seeking "a light"' but finds at first only the stark lights of night-traffic on a freeway. He faces the crunch by asking a sailor for a light for his cigarette (the first of several pointed cigarette-lightings in Anger films) which, after a brief taste of the violence to come, he gets in the form of a bundle of flaming branches from a grate. Those flames burn emotionally through the rest of the film, burning out only when the photographs of the beginning of the Dream have smouldered away. There, the fire purifies by burning; the hand with severed fingers (which at the start of the film stands for the Dreamer's stunted adolescence, and which is visually compared with the stubs in an empty book of matches) is restored to wholeness at the end of the film, when the ritual has been braved and endured.

Fire is a major part of the element of *control* in *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome.* Lilith, the first guest to arrive at Shiva's convocation, is 'born of flame' in a triple-dissolve amongst the most flawless in the history of montage, but she 'burns' in the superimposed red flames (from Harry Lachman's staggering *Dante's Inferno*) with her fellow-guests when Shiva assumes control. Kali, on the other hand, controls fire from the moment she lights her joint by drawing flame from the tiny horned figure of a devil; and it is she at the end who 'blesses the Rites of the Children of the Light while Shiva evokes the godhead with the formula *Force and Fire,*' her image persisting through the visual delirium of the finale. Like her, Scorpio creates his own fire — by striking a match on his teeth to light his cigarette.

The power of Light is the explicit object of *Invocation of my Demon Brother*: the 'shadowing forth of Our Lord Lucifer. The dance of the Magus widdershins around the Swirling Spiral Force, the solar swastika, until the Bringer of Light — Lucifer — breaks through.' Even in the Anger films in which Light plays no evident part in the action, it is of note: in *Eaux d'Artifice* (as the title suggests, it's the converse of *Fireworks*), Light is conspicuous by its absence, which is part of the film's satiric purpose. Equally, it's no accident that Anger's filmic tarot card *Kustom Kar Kommandos,* a view of the 7th trump, the Charioteer, should prove to have the Title: The Lord of the Triumph of Light.

666 MAGICK

'The science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the Will. Magick is the Science of understanding oneself and one's conditions. It is the Art of applying that understanding in action.' (Aleister Crowley)

Kenneth Anger is a follower of the English occultist Aleister Crowley, who designated his work *Magick,* deliberately choosing a discredited term and swearing to rehabilitate it. The fundamental precepts and workings of Magick are set out most accessibly (in every sense) in Crowley's major work *Magick in Theory and Practice,* and it would be foolish and presumptuous to attempt to summarise them here. Anger is totally committed to Magick (and is indeed increasingly inclined to regard his occult work as more important than the films) and so, naturally, it informs the films he makes. Which is not to say that the movies are esoteric mysteries, impenetrable to non-followers of Crowley's line, but simply that the viewer who comes to them with some awareness of what Magick is about will have a sharper understanding of why Anger made them the way he did. At the lowest level: the viewer of *Scorpio Rising* alert to Magick will notice (eventually) the tiny shot in the rally scenes near the end of the movie where Anger zooms in on a motorcycle numbered '777', and will recognise this as a Magickal reference, since 777 is the number Title of one of the most important Magick manuals, a table of correspondances from the Qabalah. 'Seeing' this fleeting, unemphasised shot (joke? comment? Magick co-incidence?) is rather different from, say, recognising an in-joke in early Godard; the viewer who 'sees' it understands better the way Anger put the sequence together. On a higher level: the viewer who recognises that *Fireworks* corresponds to the Magick ritual The Building of the Pyramid (a process of *self*-initiation, in which the candidate *confesses*) will appreciate more keenly what the film meant and means to Anger. Anger's increasingly dominant concern with Magick is reflected in *Invocation of my Demon Brother,* which limits its terms of reference almost exclusively to Magick ritual, and which will thus inevitably perplex the viewer who expects to comprehend the meaning of actions outside the context of the movie he's seeing them in. But Anger, unassailable in his confidence in Magick, knows (as he did with *Pleasure Dome*) that the movie *works,* that it

'Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome': Cameron as Lady Kali.

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The first part of 'L'Histoire d'O.'

will affect any audience long before they consciously understand it.

For the record, in Anger's own words: 'The Age that ended in 1962 was the Piscean Age, the Age of the Fish, which was the Age of Jesus Christ. Where the Piscean Age was ruled by Neptune, the planet of mysticism, the Aquarian Age is ruled by Uranus, the most erratic planet of all . . . it's the sign of the unexpected, revolution, for one thing . . .The last 2000 years were based on renunciation, sacrifice, and guilt. The fight for the next generation, the next 25 years, 50 years, just the beginning of the fight really, is skinning off the shell that's left over from the last era.'*

In the films, Anger uses 'astrology like color. I use it in a poetic sense.' Thus *Scorpio Rising* dramatises the tensions between the powers of the dying Piscean Age and the Scorpions of the incoming Aquarian Age, though the precise terms of reference of the film are governed by Anger's interests and tastes. This gives the lie to Ronald Tavel's sadly weak attack on Anger (in his essay 'Shortcomings of the Sexual Metaphor in New York's Independent Films,' collected in Gregory Battcock's anthology *The New American Cinema,* Dutton 1967); Tavel ignores the fact that a system of astrology is simply a means of classifying 'the numberless possibilities which lie open to us', and fails to observe the breathtaking freedom of invention that typifies Anger's films. As even a pop astrologer (the kind reviled by Crowley) knows, Aquarian people love humanity, not in a Sagattarian way (personal love) but rather they love the life principle. To the Aquarian, the fact that there is life makes all things possible. Anger is an Aquarian.

7 THE MAGICK LANTERN CYCLE

Fireworks, like Kenneth Anger's other early films, was made primarily because it fulfilled a need — 'these imaginary displays provide a temporary release'. Harry Smith, in his interview with P. Adams Sitney (*Film Culture 37,* also collected in Battcock's book), describes Anger at home at this time, and also how he (Smith) arranged the first large public screening of the movie. 'As a child I felt a terrible need for love, and there was a terrible lack. My family offered nothing, and so I found it vicariously in violence. There's a strain of violence all through my films.' In *Fireworks,* Anger plays himself coming to terms with his developing identity — a Dreamer who is 'drawn through the needle's eye', and realises his dreams. It is constructed with luminous clarity (Terry Southern calls it the most perfectly structured film he's seen): the start of the Dream is a vision of the Dreamer bloody and inert in the arms of a sailor — a passive victim; and after the ordeal photographs of this scene catch fire and burn away. Complementarily, an early shot in the movie, a pan down the wall of the room to the Dreamer alone in bed and then on to the broken form of a white hand in the foreground, is repeated exactly at the end of the film, but with another (faceless) boy in bed with him, and the hand repaired.

The development of the main part of the film is too direct to require analysis; no audience is immune to its convulsive violence. Worth pointing out, though, is the way that *Fireworks* established several important motifs for future films. Most interesting is the Dreamer's waking at the start; all Anger's films begin either with the act of waking, or a metaphor for it. This suggests more simply and forcefully than any other image I have come across the *autonomous* life of the film as an *active* experience when it is being projected. It relates explicitly to the theme of film as ritual, as, in the case of *Fireworks*, does the soundtrack: thunder before the music, to clear the air . . . The waking is followed by the (ritual) act of dressing, an assumption of identity. In *Fireworks*, the Dreamer dresses anonymously in white shirt and black pants, hesitantly and fumblingly, his anxieties crystalised in the image of the broken hand. The theme is worked through: the sailors (in uniform, a group) rip the Dreamer's clothes off, and he undergoes the trial naked; but after the ordeal, and the extremely beautiful images of milk flowing like balm over the bloody flesh, the Dreamer is seen stirring from the floor of the urinal, wearing a sailor's cap. The sailor of the prologue is seen again in his Roman Candle orgasm, and the Dreamer metamorphoses into a Christmas tree in ironic ecstacy; and is finally back in his bed 'less empty than before', naked but not alone.

Other motifs introduced in *Fireworks* are the cigarette (taken up with Kali's and Scorpio's, and prototype of the fan in *Eaux d'Artifice* and the Wand in *Invocation*) and the theme, crucial in *Pleasure Dome* and *Scorpio*, of an individual bending others to his Will: though the Dreamer is the sailor's victim, and they constitute the group from which he is excluded, they are his *agents* in the ritual of self-initiation, and when they have served their purpose they simply disappear, subsumed into the Dreamer's new-found strength. *Fireworks* also establishes the cyclic structure that dominates all the films up to *Kustom Kar Kommandos*: a ritual begun, developed, and achieved, infinitely repeatable, with the Maker's batteries charged a little higher each time. All Kenneth Anger's films gain increasingly with repeated viewings.

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Point of No Return: Bruce Byron as Scorpio in overdrive

Eaux d' Artifice retells *Fireworks* in opposite terms. The Lady enters the 'night-time labyrinth of cascades, balustrades, grottoes and fountains', and tries to lure out the monsters with her fan; she's trying to invoke the water gods. Anger's own happy analogy is a middle-aged queen cruising for rough trade. She fails, being weak and frivolous, and melts into the water (surrenders her identity) so that she can play on.

Anger's grandmother was a costume mistress in silent films, and it was she who, working with Reinhardt, got Kenneth into the 1935 *Midsummer Night's Dream*. In his early youth Anger used to love dressing up in her costumes ('my transvestite period') and it was this that inspired the costume in *Eaux d'Artifice,* worn there by a circus dwarf Anger met in Italy. The Lady ('a Firbank heroine in pursuit of a nightmoth') owes her plumes to Anger's Reinhardt costume, and her light-headedness to her past in Anger's childhood.

For all its (high) satiric content, *Eaux d'Artifice* is 'romance in the highest sense'. Its place is leisured, its action timeless, its texture exquisite. The form is journey: at the start, the Lady revolves under the fountain she wants to own, and at the end she leaves the garden for a cold, dry world, leaving that fountain far behind in the distance. In between, her fluttering progress is cheerfully observed, tripping daintily through the supremely elaborate water-works that so effortlessly dominate her. Eventually she reaches the great stairway, and descends it in excited diagonals, while the water gods (cut-ins) watch threatingly. At the bottom, she spreads her (hand-tinted) fan, but without success — and she passively allows herself to be subsumed into the fountains, the image prefiguring its opposite, when Sandy merges into his Buggy in *KKK*. Here, *Fireworks'* 'cold water of consciousness' becomes a gushing trip of its own, phallically spurting in Anger's most formally completely observed dream world.

Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome is full-scale ritual, to invoke Horus, the Crowned and Conquering Child, the God-head of the Aquarian Age. It takes the form of a party. hosted by the Magician, in the guise of Lord Shiva, and his Scarlet Woman, Whore of Heaven, as Lady Kali. Their guests arrive in the guise of figures from mythology: Lilith, Isis, another woman, and then Pan, and then Astarte. The catalyst is Yage, Wormwood Brew, stolen from Hecate and served by Cesare the somnambulist (from *Caligari*). Lord Shiva venoms Pan's drink, and the Orgia ensues: 'a Magick masquerade party at which Pan is the prize . . .'

Pleasure Dome is a vision of the Divine. Its most important element is *control*, and the control is Shiva's; he manipulates the guests from the moment they arrive, bearing their gifts, and has a different *persona* to receive each — from Osiris (to receive Isis' Golden Serpent) to Nero (to accept the Bunch of Bacchus from Pan). For the party, though, Shiva is resplendent in phallic headdress as the Great Beast 666, and as such he works on his guests till he exults in the consummation of the ritual as they abandon their individual identities. Shiva's gesture of consummation is the meeting of his open hands in an arc, and this image, constantly repeated, is the only stable element in the frenetic superimpositions of the movie's lengthy climax; in superimposition, it is as if Shiva is subsuming the others' passions into himself, and this is the key to the film: the disparate elements in the game, as moulded by Shiva, come together in Him, who repeats the ritual infinitely (continuous performances . . .) until He becomes God. Crowley speaks of this in *Magick in Theory and Practice*: 'A Eucharist . . . is of more importance than any other magical ceremony, because it is a complete circle. The whole of the force expended is completely reabsorbed, yet the virtue is that vast gain represented by the abyss between Man and God.'

Pleasure Dome is so rich that little justice can be done it in so brief a piece as this. Like certain of Yeats' later plays (*The Herne's Egg*) it balances confidently between the most profound and the farcical, often using both at once: as in the arrival of Astarte (played literally radiantly by Anais Nin), first shedding a wrap yards long, and then in an aura of moonlight very beautifully magnifying her Gift of a Golden Sphere before presenting it to Shiva, who sprouts the Wings of Snow and flutters in delight like a Boy in Fairy-land. The use of character-types is precise: Lilith has the pouting erotism of a Fifties cover girl, shocked when Shiva spurns her gift; Pan (played by Paul Mathison, who also painted the main title) is gorgeous beyond words, his expression glittering with evil self-interest and/or lechery when Astarte enters, and suffering most later in Shiva's manipulation of events; the painter Cameron remarkable as Kali, aloofly observing, and intervening only when Shiva gets a little *too* much into the swing of things, chinking goblets like champagne glasses with Lilith; Curtis Harrington as Cesare, eloquently silent (the part having great resonances in his own films: Cameron and Mathison were involved in *Night Tide* and *Games* has several explicit quotes from Anger's

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film); and Anger himself the most physically expressive, as Hecate gyrating in fury at the theft of the Sacred Mushroom. In preparing the 1966 Sacred Mushroom Edition, Anger gave the movie a new track: Janacek's *Glagolitic Mass,* which like the songs in *Scorpio* is inseparable from the movie once you've seen it.

Scorpio Rising uses the same cyclic structure, and a similar form of ritual, with a number of disparate elements coming together in the experience of the central protagonist. It begins as 'a conjuration of the Presiding Princes, Angels and Spirits of MARS' with short, timeless sequences devoted to the motorcyclers waking (of course), dressing (of course) and working on their Machines. This movement culminates in the introduction to Scorpio himself ('You look like an Angel . . . but you're the Devil in disguise'), who gets up, turns on, and then goes out to desecrate a church, while other cyclers have a Hallowe'en party, and yet others ride rallies in the open country. In the church, Scorpio urinates into his helmet, and consecrates it; immediately he becomes his Demon Brother (black-masked, sub-machine-gun toting) while the Word is made Flesh in a curious death-totem/idol like a skeleton in a pressure suit (which reappears in *Invocation*). Scorpio in the church has a (brilliantly montage-based) rapport with the cyclers on their rally, and his Demon engineers a crash in which the cycler dies . . . The film moves from waking (the first shot, like the opening of *Endgame,* is a removal of a dustcover, which a metaphor for the same thing) to death; and its cycle is achieved in a world of the red of mortality (the main title to the flashing red light of the end), comprehending death and initiation.

The structure is simple; the terms of reference are complex. In *Boys and Bolts*, the first part, the contrast is with a kid playing with his toy Police cyclers, wearing an 'I Was Born to Raise Hell' button which reappears on Scorpio's wall (suffer the little children . . .), which calls to mind incidentally Anger's early puppet films. In *Image Maker* the contrast is with Brando in meticulously selected snippets from *The Wild One* (precisely the kind of 'social' movie that Anger *isn't* making), with the aura of James Dean as a complement and a corrective. In *Walpurgis Party,* the contrast is with Christ ('J. C. wallflower at the Cycler's Sabbath'), who exists in a pallid blue alien world of vague 'eternal longings'. And in *Rebel Rouser* the contrast is with Hitler, the autocrat bending masses to his Will, but to perverted, impersonal ends. The powers of the Piscean Age are brought up to the rising sign of Scorpio in the Aquarian Age, and found wanting . . .

The ritual, then, is Scorpio's; when he moves into overdrive in the final *Wipeout* sequence he becomes Thanatos ('in chrome and black leather and bursting jeans'). Unlike Shiva's, his ritual includes death; as a scorpion he stings. One guy shows at the Hallowe'en party as a skeleton with his prick hanging out — an astonishing image of virility in death; the cycle is *necessarily* violent to the point of death — it has to be that extreme in order to break away from the past. Initiation is seen as a kind of jokey reprise of *Fireworks,* but with really agonised electric screams on the track. Scorpio *is* the cycler who dies, but he *also* lives to carry out the ritual again. As it develops, the movie explores fascinating tensions between Scorpio Rising and Descending: the super-butch men of the early sequences give way to the frivolous guys playing around at the party, just as the 'monumental' sequences in which they are celebrated give way to the greater narrative flow of the later sequences; and the beautiful machines they cherish (at their best in the brilliant *Taurus* sequence, where John Sapienza puts the saddles on his Machine under the eye of The Reaper) give way to ordinary rally cycles. The decline on one level counterpoints Scorpio's personal ascendancy, but the tensions are richly resonant: as Scorpio flags the rally cyclers from the church altar (at the end of *Point of No Return*) behind the deathshead flag is seen the scorpion: rising, descending, rising, descending, descending . . .

Kustom Kar Kommandos evokes the Dream Lover, but as a blind for the Charioteer of the Tarot Trumps. Infinitely more subtly, it restates the theme of *Fireworks*; it is about the simultaneous longing for, and illusory attainment of an ideal. Anger's camera, gliding with the delicacy of a scrap of down, caresses the All Chrome Ruby Plush Dream Buggy, and then Sandy, the Maker, who in turn caresses it with a giant white powder puff. The images are suffused with a pink glow from the background, the Maker appears in complementary azure. The film starts with a 'waking' image of the Kar door opening into the camera, to show the Scorpio-red inside, and then moves through ten lingering, indefinable dissolves which completely circle the Kar, eventually returning to the original shot, but with the Maker this time getting into the Kar, settling, and driving off. The images centre on the powder puff, twice brushed by tiny erotic gusts, the incarnation of the spirit of the movie: very campy, but also achingly precarious. In a hallucinatory shot of Sandy's reflection on the inside of the passenger Kar door,

She Wore Blue Velvet: 'Scorpio Rising'.

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there is a moment of fusion — the colour elements (pink, azure, red, and the dull amber of the Kar itself) fuse, and Maker and Kar are one. The final shot of the sequence shows his face, serene, impassive, moving as if directed by some non-conscious force; he drives off. 'Every night I hope and pray A Dream Lover will come my way . . . '

Invocation of my Demon Brother is a fast moving, very concentrated collage of Magick elements, in effect like the last thirty seconds of *Scorpio* extended to ten minutes. Anger calls it 'my most out-front film'. A satyr pipes (an equivalent to the three knocks at the start of the *Aquarian Arcanum* which Anger used as a prologue to *Pleasure Dome,* but has now dropped) and the Wand-bearer *wakes* to begin the ritual: a Midnight Mass where the Powers of Darkness gather to 'shadow forth' Lucifer. Kenneth Anger himself as the Magus, his face black and gold, great flowing robe, bathed in red light, dances with passionate energy widdershins (anti-sunwise) around the Swirling Spiral Force, the solar swastika. The Powers: the Acolyte, the Brother and Sister of the Rainbow, His Satanic Majesty, assist and participate. Joke: a hurried procession down the stairs, but a scorpion sting in the tail: 'ZAP You're pregnant — that's witchcraft'. Pause: the Magus with a copy of Crowley's novel *Moonchild.* Renewed force: flame, and a cremation. The Magus dances, is triumphant, exults, the solar swastika in one hand, flaming script in the other. And Lucifer breaks through . . .

Cut-ins: the Wand-bearer observing (Speed Hacker amazing with snow-white hair and eyebrows, caught in the Light); two boys, first watching, then wrestling ('I was in Sacramento and I put up these two boy surfers who'd run away — one negro, one white. They were great buddies — they swore eternal friendship while they stayed . . . I filmed them . . . I risked 50 years in jail for putting them up for the night'); most important, US Marines jumping out of their helicopter in Vietnam. The movie was made on A, B and C rolls, and the C roll throughout is this one image made into a loop, so there's a continuous flow of men out of the helicopter. Mostly it's invisibly faint (Anger thinks it might be seen with infra-red glasses), twice it's there by itself: a dozen men jumping out to face a death-situation just off-screen. Anger uses it as an image of anxiety; there's an urgency about it, in the stance of the bodies. 'They're squares, enjoying the only kind of peak-exposure they'll ever know.' Anger believes that audiences will sense the flow of men through the film, even when they can't see them.

Invocation is a film with rough edges. There is minimal visual flow — every cut hurts. Thence its fabulous power. Technically, it's even more ambitious than *Pleasure Dome*; fast motion (giving the Magus' dance frightening, demonic energy), stills, multiple imposition. For the first time, Anger has an original soundtrack, composed on Moog synthesiser by Mick Jagger (the Stones' song *Sympathy for the Devil* was partly inspired by Anger); Anger calls it 'an attack on the sensorium'. Amongst many virtuoso shots, Anger has realised for himself a photograph of the Beatles he once admired, in which it appeared Ringo had 8 arms; Anger superimposes a figure on himself upside-down (like a playing card), and adds other arms. The final shots of the movie, with their pale, flickering Light, are unlike anything he has shown before.

'The true Magick of Horus requires the passionate union of opposites' (Crowley); *Invocation* is founded on a clash between the circle and the swastika ('a psychic power pack — Hitler couldn't have done it without the swastika'). The circle takes various forms: the circle of the Magus' dance, the black magician's circle, the whirling helicopter blades. Unifying all through, is the pentagram: either in straight superimposition, or on the helicopter, or in the patches of shadow, or in the angle at which characters position themselves. The image of the Marines gains force when one remembers that WW2 was a matter of US pentagrams versus German swastikas.

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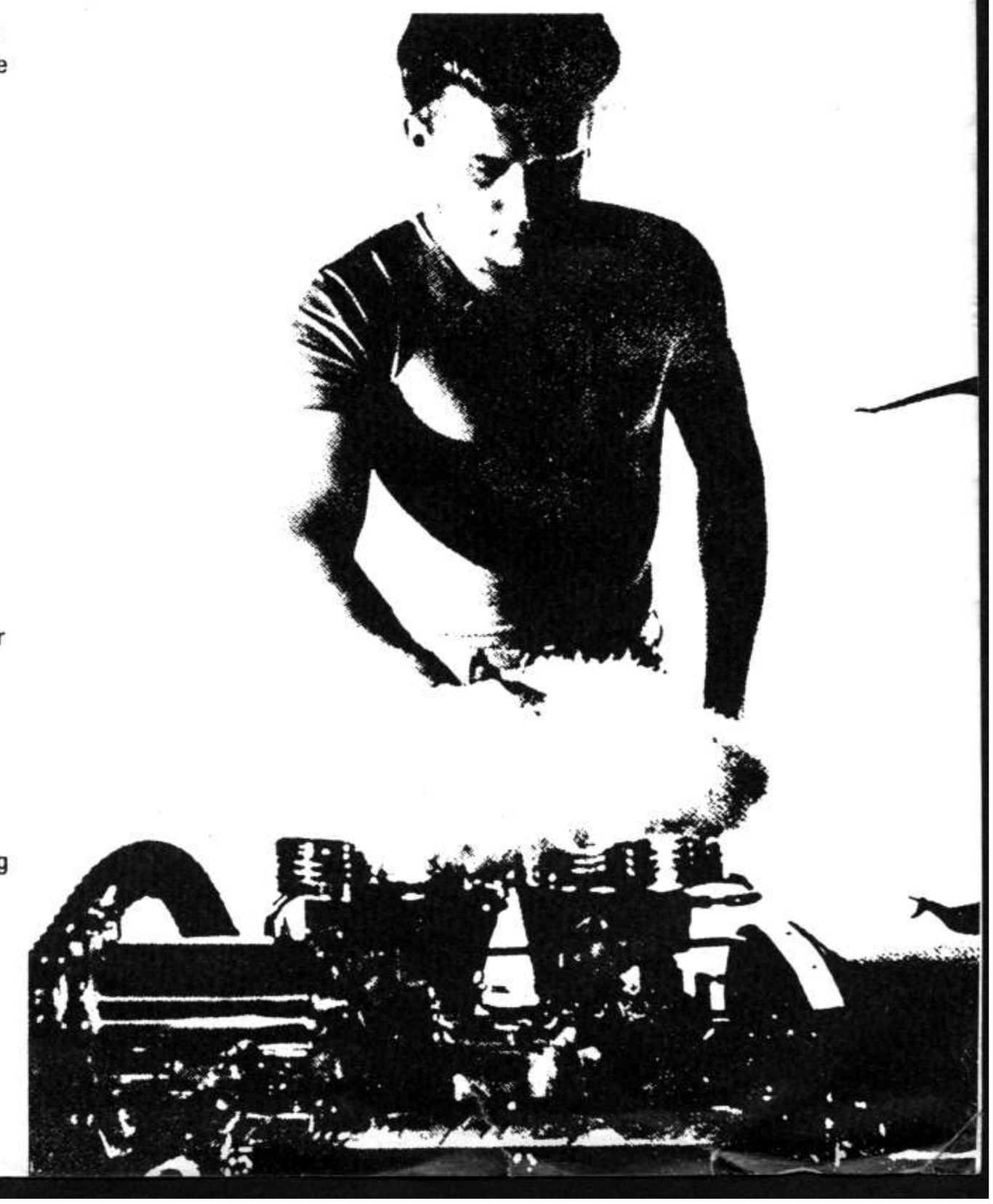
'Lucifer is a Demon. A Demon of *beauty,* which doesn't mean he doesn't still cause trouble. But then, nothing *really* causes trouble . . .'

The majority of the quotations from Kenneth Anger in this feature are taken from a long conversation with Tony Rayns on 21 July 1969. Those asterisked (*) are taken from the only previously published Anger interview, originally in the American underground magazine SPIDER, reprinted in *Film Culture 40* and in the Swedish magazine *Chaplin 79.*

I am grateful to many friends for discussions of Anger's films; particularly Alan Spademan and Jeff Stern.

An annotated filmography and interview on LUCIFER RISING will appear in a future **Cinema.**

"I wanna Dream Lover, so I Don't have to Dream alone"; 'Kustom Kar Kommandos'.



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